Differences in the Use of Positive Politeness Between Kanto and Kansai University Students

Differences in the Use of Positive Politeness Between Kanto and Kansai University Students[1)]

Misa Fujio

Abstract

Although many TV programmes compare the cultures between the eastern (Kanto) and western (Kansai) regions of Japan, academic and empirical research investigating the cultural differences is surprisingly limited. This study investigated whether any differences exist between these two regions in terms of communicative style, with a special focus on politeness, and observed how the differences can be transferred into speakers' L2 (English) communication. Based on the results of previous studies, a discourse completion test using typical speech acts (apologies, complaints and compliments) was developed and administered to university students in both Tokyo and Kyoto. The results indicated a tendency among students in Kyoto to use an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) more explicitly, adjusting their messages with the use of downgraders or upgraders; meanwhile, students in Tokyo remained silent in the same situations. In addition, the data indicated the potential for academic level to be another factor influencing the degree of politeness. Regarding transfer from L1 to L2, no outstanding findings were observed in this study.

1 Introduction

Transfer from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) has been reported in numerous studies, in terms of not only linguistic competence, but also pragmatic competence (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Iwai & Rinnert, 2001). Most studies have reported pragmatic differences by nation or how national differences in pragmatic conventions influence individuals' answers in L2 (English) in several speech acts, such as apologies, requests, complaints and compliments. The results are informative when we consider what makes Japanese students' responses somewhat unnatural or strange in English. However, a more productive way to investigate transfer is to discuss how the L1 communicative style can be positively transferred to L2 communication. For example, Fujio (2011) reported that one's profession was also reflected in L2 communication, providing the example of a civil servant participant who was accustomed to explaining complicated regulations to people. In L2 communication, this participant used more communication strategies than other participants to make a framework of her talk or check common ground with the interlocutor. In addition to profession, several other factors can be assumed to influence communication

style, including gender, generation or regionality.

In this study, the author investigated differences in communication style between Kanto and Kansai, with a special focus on politeness and observed how the differences will be transferred to L2 communication. It is often said that, in Kansai, people tend to incorporate more jokes or humour into their conversations and be more talkative. In addition, based on her own experience of being brought up in Kyoto, the author has noticed significant differences in university students' presentation styles: students in Tokyo tend to be more serious and nervous when presenting. Indeed, Onoue (1999) reported that people in Osaka use unique positive politeness strategies to involve the interlocutor in the conversation. If such differences are confirmed between the two regions studied here and shown to be positively transferred into L2 communication, the differences may be utilised for future English education. In the current study, a discourse completion test was conducted as a first step to compare the two regions.

In the next section of this article, the theoretical framework is reviewed in the order of politeness theories, interlanguage pragmatics, and regionality between Kanto and Kansai. In Section 3, the methodology is explained. In Section 4, the analyses are reported, and in Section 5, the points highlighted from Section 4 are discussed. In the last section, the future research agenda is summarised.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Politeness theories

The English concept of politeness is not an equal translation from the Japanese *keigo*. Politeness is a broader term that can be defined as the (linguistic) devices used to maintain a good human relationship. It becomes especially important when we are forced to threaten somebody's face, which Brown and Levinson regarded as 'want, defining it as 'the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself' (1987: 61). These authors categorised face into positive face and negative face as follows:

> Positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others.
> Negative face: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others. (1987:62)

For these basic wants, we usually need some redressing actions when our action may threaten somebody's face. Brown and Levinson raised five possible scenarios for when a face-threatening act (FTA) is used (Figure 1).

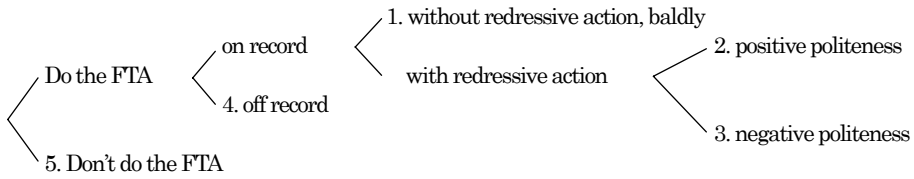


Figure 1 Possible strategies for doing FTAs (Brown and Levinson 1987: 69)

The first choice is to decide whether we do the FTA or give it up. Once we decide to try it, we face two basic choices: whether to mention the act (on record) or just hint at it and make the interpretation open (off record) through the use of metaphors, understatements, and so on. Furthermore, once we decide to try a FTA on record, we have two choices: do it without redressive actions, such as using an imperative form, or do it with redressive actions to 'give face to the addressee' (Brown & Levinson 1987:69), using various politeness strategies.

Positive politeness is often explained as one way to shorten the distance to the interlocutor; its strategies include exaggeration, intensification, use of in-group identity markers, agreement-seeking behaviours, disagreement avoidance, presupposition of common ground, the use of jokes and the provision of reasons. On the other hand, negative politeness involves maintaining some distance from the interlocutor; its strategies include using question forms, minimising the imposition, giving deference, impersonalising and stating the FTA as a general rule.

Although this politeness theory has traditionally been the most influential theory in the research on politeness, an increasing number of authors have recently claimed to incorporate new perspectives. For example, Spencer-Oatey (2004) maintained the importance of incorporating a social/interdependent perspective or social expectancies, as often seen in Asian societies, in addition to the personal/independent perspective presented by Brown and Levinson (1987). Spencer-Oatey (2009) also pointed out the importance of the interactional aspect of face-making; claiming that face should be investigated not only from a traditional hearer's point of view, but also from a speaker's point of view. Takiura (2008) explained the politeness system holistically, especially in terms of 'distance' in human relations, and sorted out the relationship between (face-threatening) speech acts and speaker/hearer face, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1 Types of speech acts and threatened face (Takeura 2008:30)[2)]

	Negative face	Positive face
The other (hearer)	Requests	Criticism
Self (speaker)	Promises	Apologies

This table clearly indicates the relationship between speech acts and politeness. In fact, many studies have investigated politeness using FTAs, which will be elaborated upon in the next section.

2.2 Interlanguage pragmatics

Spencer-Oatey (2004) categorised the ways to analyse politeness into five domains: illocutionary domain (e.g., speech acts), discourse domain (e.g., selection of topics), participation domain (e.g., turn-taking), stylistic domain (e.g., choice of tone) and non-verbal domain (e.g., gestures). The illocutionary domain (with a special focus on speech acts) has been reported in various fields of studies, including interlanguage pragmatics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka 1993), in which pragmatic conventions or the pragmatic transfer of participants from different nations—especially learners of English—are compared. In their seminal study, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) discussed the coding of data using two speech acts: requests and apologies. The authors analysed data from several different dimensions—namely, the sequence of the speech act or semantic components of the speech act, level of (in)directness, and use of downgraders/upgraders.

In addition, many studies have compared Japanese participants with those in other countries. Some researchers have reported that Japanese participants tended to be direct or use fewer mitigating strategies in English (e.g., Tanaka 1988; Iwai & Rinnert 2001) while others reported their style-shift according to the social status of the interlocutor (e.g., Beebe & Takahashi 1989) or their less reliance on positive politeness (e.g., Takahashi & Beebe 1993). In light of the numerous studies that have reported national differences in pragmatic conventions or pragmatic transfer from L1, this article will investigate how L1 pragmatic conventions can be utilised for L2 communication.

2.3 Cultural differences between Kanto and Kansai

There are many TV programs that compare the differences in culture between Kanto and Kansai. However, when it comes to academic research that clearly explains why these two regions differ, the number of previous studies is extremely limited. One of these precious studies was conducted by Higuchi (1976), who explained the regional differences from geographical, historical and political angles.

According to Higuchi, the primary factor affecting regional differences is geography. The Kanto region used to be mountainous and lean; therefore, land was especially valued and regarded as important property. In addition, as horses were used as a means of transportation, people gradually formed groups using horses, eventually becoming Bushidan or Japanese warriors. Meanwhile, the Kansai region was more fertile and started marine trading in the early days,

taking advantage of the fact that the region faced the Inner Sea. As a result, the region's monetary system developed earlier than in the Kanto region. Against this backdrop, the Kansai region—once the centre of trading—emphasised communication and developed more humour (e.g., Inoue 1984) whereas the Kanto region developed into the Bushidan (Japanese warriors) society, in which vertical relationships were clearer and communication was less emphasised than in Kansai.

Such differences are also reported in the form of politeness. Onoue (1999) introduced a narration style developed in Osaka called 'vivid present'. This style involves the interlocutor in the narration by using the present tense and sharing the experience being discussed in the narration; therefore, this can be regarded as a positive politeness strategy. Whereas positive politeness plays an important role in English, the Japanese politeness system has been found to be negative politeness oriented (e.g., Takahashi & Beebe 1993; Takiura 2008). Thus, it might be effective to investigate the use of positive politeness in the Kansai region as reported and consider the possibility of incorporating it into L2 communication.

3 Methodology

In this research, as a first step in comparing the two examined regions, a discourse completion test (DCT) was conducted, based on previous studies (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olstein 1994; Iwai & Rinnert 2001). Although a DCT is not naturalistic data and does not guarantee that the participants will behave as reported in actual communication in which other variables may intervene (e.g., time constraints or physical contexts), a DCT can indicate the most likely behaviour the participants would try in a given situation and is an effective way to collect a certain amount of data. In addition, it allowed the author to compare the results with previous studies. As for the speech acts in the DCT, four typical speech acts were initially chosen: 1) apologies, 2) requests, 3) complaints and 4) compliments.

3.1 Research questions

This study primarily investigated differences in politeness between Kanto and Kansai, and then observed how the differences could be transferred into L2 (English) communication. Tokyo and Kyoto were chosen as representative cities of Kanto and Kansai, respectively, as will be explained in the next section. Two research questions were formulated:

1) Are there any differences in the use of politeness between people in Tokyo and in Kyoto? If so, what are the specific differences?
2) Is there any possibility that these differences influence their L2 performance?

Although specific hypotheses were not formulated (as this is not a full-fledged quantitative experiment), the author assumed that the participants in Kyoto would use more politeness strategies while those in Tokyo would remain silent—that is, avoid an FTA—in the same situations, based on the historical explanations provided by Higuchi (as summarised in the previous section) and her own experiences.

3.2 Research participants

This research employed two different methods to collect the data: a DCT and a focus group. As a pilot study, a DCT was administered in both Tokyo and Kyoto. Then a focus group consisting of eight participants was conducted in Tokyo to deepen the author's interpretation of the data. (As equivalent data—namely, a focus group in Kyoto—was not obtained, the results of the focus group are excluded from the current study.) In order to minimise the variables for comparison, university students were chosen as the participants because adult participants may be affected by variables beyond regionality, such as their profession and age (generation).

Two cities, Tokyo and Kyoto, were chosen as representatives of the Kanto and Kansai regions, respectively. As Higuchi (1976) pointed out, Tokyo is most likely to represent the Kanto region, whereas, in the case of Kansai, Osaka is also regarded as a representative city. For the current study, Kyoto was chosen for several reasons. In addition to data accessibility,[3] both Tokyo and Kyoto share a common feature as a capital city—Kyoto in the past and Tokyo in the present; furthermore, the interpretation of the data becomes more precise as the author was born and raised in Kyoto for nearly 25 years.[4] Data were collected at two different universities in both cities (described as T1, T2, K1 and K2; see Table 2).

Table 2 Breakdown of the participants

	Tokyo	Kyoto
Pilot Study	18 out of 67 (T1)	18 out of 28 (K1)
Main Study	20 out of 110 (T1)	17 out of 57 (K1)
Main Study	13 out of 66 (T2)	15 out of 50 (K2)

Out of 243 and 135 DCT responses collected in Tokyo and Kyoto, respectively, only those who were born and brought up in each of the two cities were selected as otherwise their politeness system would be mixed with another regionality. As a result, 51 participants in Tokyo and 50 in Kyoto were selected. Fortunately, the number of participants was nearly equal although the data size became much smaller than originally expected.

3.3 Procedures

When the pilot study was analysed, very few differences were observed regarding the speech act, requests. Considering requests as a representative speech act of negative politeness (see Section 2.1), all the speech acts in which differences were observed turned out to be related to positive politeness. Therefore, the current study focuses on the following speech acts: apologies, complaints, and compliments. In each speech act, two different contexts were defined for the questions: when the interlocutor is a senior (professor) and when the interlocutor is a friend. All questions were taken from previous studies (Iwai & Rinnert 2001; Rinnert & Iwai 2002) as follows. The participants were instructed to answer in both Japanese and English.

1) You're at your friend's house. While you're taking off your jacket, it catches on a vase and the vase falls and breaks into pieces. What would you say? (Apologies to a friend)
2) You agreed to help Professor X with his (her) research project at 9:00 am. However, you overslept and you will be late by about 1 hour. Now you are making a call. (Apologies to a professor)
3) You lent a book to a classmate. As it is your favourite book, you were not willing to lend it, but the friend insisted. When it was returned, you noticed there was a spot made from spilt juice. (Complaints to a friend)
4) Your professor is going to show a video during the seminar. S/he tries to start the video but nothing comes on. You notice that it does not seem to be completely plugged into the outlet. (Complaints to a professor)
5) You've met a friend in the hallway. S/he is wearing a very nice jacket. How would you respond? (Compliments to a friend)
6) You've met the professor of your seminar in the hallway. S/he is wearing a very nice jacket. How would you respond? (Compliments to a professor)

Strictly speaking, question 4) is not a complaint. However, it is difficult to imagine a situation in which a Japanese student would make a clear complaint to a professor. Instead, a more likely situation was selected—namely, a scene in which a student points out something that may be face-threatening to a professor.

3.4 Analytical framework

Based on previous research (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olstein 1994; Iwai & Rinnert 2001), the data in the current study were analysed using two different dimensions: semantic components and the use of downgraders and upgraders. With regard to the level of directness/indirectness, the answers that used indirectness were extremely limited in this study. Therefore, they are included as 'indirect' semantic

components. The figures in the next section display downgraders and upgraders in the same way so that the results are immediately understandable.

As Blum-Kulka and Olstein (1994) and Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) analysed, a typical sequence or a typical set of semantic components can be observed in a speech act. The following is an example of apologies.

1) Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID): (Ex.) I'm sorry.
2) Taking on responsibility: (Ex.) My mistake.
3) Explanation or account: (Ex.) I was sick.
4) Offer of repair: (Ex.) I'll buy you another one.
5) Promise of forbearance: (Ex.) I promise you it won't happen again.

In addition, several other components were observed in this study, such as addressing terms (e.g., the name of the interlocutor) or emotions (e.g., 'wow').

Meanwhile, downgraders or upgraders can be used at several different levels, including at the sentential level (e.g., the use of interrogative forms or past tense) or at the lexical level (e.g., 'very' or 'little'). In this study, both are treated as downgraders/ upgraders.

With regard to the other speech acts, the analysis was conducted the same way.

4 Analysis

In this section, the analytical results of each speech act in Japanese are first presented and followed by an analysis of the L2 (English) answers. Finally, general tendencies are summarised.

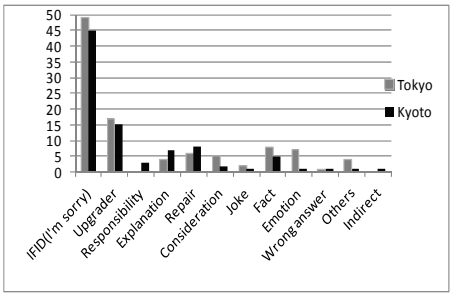
4.1 Apologies

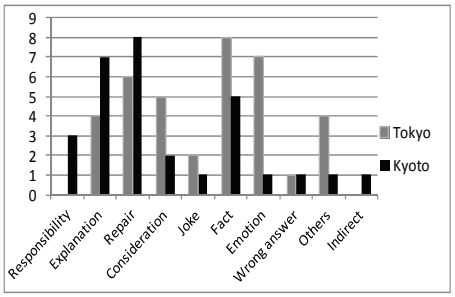
Figure 2.1 (on the left) compares the two regions in the speech act of apologies to a friend. The vertical axis shows the number of the participants who included the semantic component. As the figure shows, no big differences emerge between the two regions. Almost all participants used an IFID or explicitly mentioned 'I'm sorry'. The reason why the number of Kyoto was slightly lower is that some participants provided an inappropriate answer (i.e., misunderstood the question), an indirect one ('Can I borrow a floorcloth?') or a responsibility ('It's my fault'). The use of upgraders such as 'very' showed a similar pattern.

However, a closer look reveals several differences. Figure 2.2 (on the right) focuses on the semantic components with fewer than 10 occurrences. More participants in Kyoto mentioned their responsibility, explained what happened and offered a repair. When the total number of these three components is calculated as a percentage of the total answers of each region, the percentage for

Kyoto is 36% while for Tokyo it remained 20%. On the other hand, more participants in Tokyo included consideration (such as 'Aren't you injured?'), fact (such as 'I've broken it'), emotion (such as 'wow') or others (such as 'What should I do?'). Consideration is a device to show some care for the interlocutor. Fact is one way to make the incident objective; in particular, when a more impersonalised expression is used such as 'It's broken', it functions as a device to mitigate the speaker's own responsibility. Emotion helps the speaker show his/her surprise; therefore, it emphasises the unexpectedness of the incident, detaching the speaker from the incident. Lastly, regarding Others, by asking a question such as 'What should I do?', the speaker refers to his/her own responsibility to the interlocutor. When these four components are calculated in the same way (as a percentage of the total answers of each region), the percentage for Tokyo is 47% while for Kyoto it is only 18%. The above results are contrasting in that in Kyoto the participants tended to assume their responsibility and claim for repair while in Tokyo they tried to mitigate their responsibility by showing unexpectedness or referring to the interlocutor (although they remain just tendencies and further investigation is needed for a stronger claim).

Figure 3 shows the next case, apologies to a professor.





Figures 2.1 & 2.2 Apologies (To a friend)

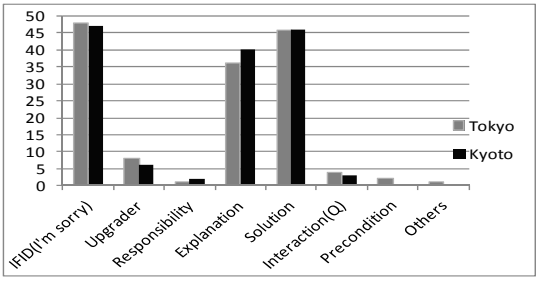


Figure 3 Apologies to a professor

Compared to Figure 2.1, fewer differences were observed between the regions. However, this speech act most reflected differences among participants based on

their level at the university. Only T2 students used a precondition, which explains the background and establishes common ground before apologising. This point will be elaborated upon in Section 5, Discussion.

4.2 Complaints

Compared to the previous speech act, apologies, more regional differences were observed in complaints.

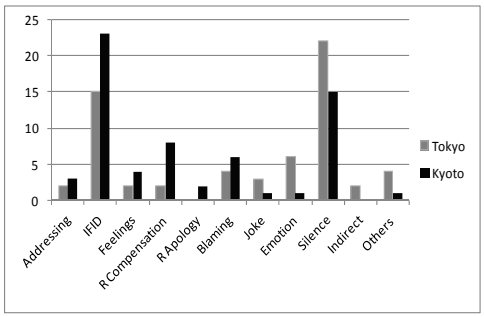


Figure 4 Complaints to a friend

As Figure 4 indicates, more participants in Kyoto used an IFID—in this case, clearly mentioning that there was a spot on the book when it was returned (Kyoto 45% vs. Tokyo 29%). In addition, they mentioned their feelings such as 'I'm sad' (Feelings), requested compensation (R Compensation) and apology (R Apology), and even explicitly blamed the other (Blaming) (Kyoto 40% vs. Tokyo 16%). On the other hand, those in Tokyo tended to be silent (Silence) (Tokyo 43% vs. Kyoto 29%). Indirect expressions (Indirect) were very limited in number, including only 'I didn't realise that I lent you a book containing a spot' or 'Let's put a juice on a flat space'. Interestingly, these indirect expressions were used only by the participants at T2, which will be also discussed in Section 5, Discussion.

Regional differences are also clearly observed in the speech act to a professor.

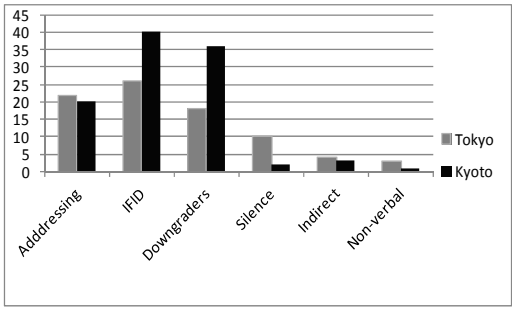


Figure 5 Complaints to a professor

Once again, as Figure 5 indicates, more participants in Kyoto used an IFID—in this case, mentioning that the professor had not connected the line to the outlet (Kyoto 80% vs. Tokyo 51%). At the same time, they used more downgraders (Kyoto 72% vs. Tokyo 35%). On the other hand, more participants in Tokyo tended to be silent in the same situation (Tokyo 20% vs. Kyoto 4%).

As summarised in Section 3, downgraders can be used at several different levels, such as sentential or lexical. In this case, two major types of downgraders were observed: lexical downgraders (represented by the use of 'possibly') and the use of a question form. In other words, more participants in Kyoto mentioned something that might be face-threatening to a professor, incorporating downgraders more often, while those in Tokyo tended to avoid a FTA.

4.3 Compliments

Although the previous two speech acts—apologies and compliments—were both FTAs (for the speaker and the hearer, respectively), the compliments act is regarded as a face-enhancing act (Spencer-Oatey 2004), where how clearly the speaker uses an IFID—in this case, praising the interlocutor's jacket—and intensifying the speaker's interests are focal points.

As Figure 6 indicates, once again, more participants in Kyoto explicitly made a compliment to a friend (Kyoto 90% vs. Tokyo 78%) and used more upgraders, such as 'very' and 'really' (Kyoto 22% vs. Tokyo 4%). In addition, they tried to develop the conversation by asking a question (Developing C), such as 'Where did you buy it?' (Kyoto 24% vs. Tokyo 10%). On the other hand, more participants in Tokyo tended to remain silent in the same situation (Tokyo 18% vs. Kyoto 6%).

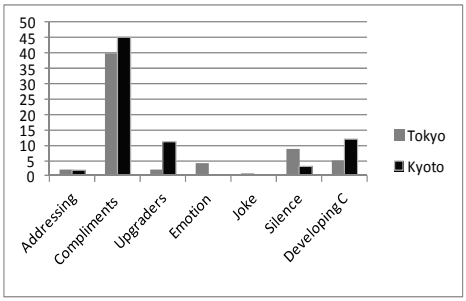


Figure 6 Compliments to a friend

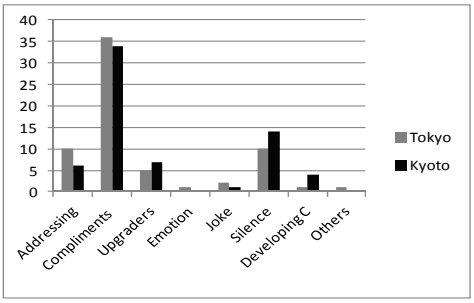


Figure 7 Compliments to a professor

However, when it comes to a professor (Figure 7), the tendency of clearly complimenting (Tokyo 71% vs. Kyoto 68%) and being silent (Tokyo 20% vs. Kyoto 28%) was the opposite, although the number of differences was very limited. The use of upgraders and development of the conversation showed the same tendencies as in the case of compliments to a friend. Only in this speech act were

the results opposite of those in other acts, and it is hard for the author to give a precise interpretation. However, the most plausible explanation seems to be the psychological distance between the student and his/her professor. In the case of apologies, the students have to say something, whereas in compliments they can avoid making a compliment if they are not willing to. Other factors that may have influenced their answers will also be discussed in Section 5.

4.4 Transfer to L2 (English) communication

This section presents the analytical results of the English answers. Unfortunately, most participants' level of English was too low to closely observe the transfer of regional differences into L2 communication. In fact, 22% of all participants could not answer in English at all or just answered 'I'm sorry' or 'thank you'. However, the differences by university were quite noticeable. The average number of English words used in the speech act of apologising to a professor—in which the participants tended to use the largest number of words—is shown here.

T1: 6.9 (7.7) words　T2: 7.5 words　K1: 7.5 words　K2: 3.8 (6.3) words

The number in the parentheses indicates the average number of words excluding those participants who did not answer in English. All participants at T2 and K1 answered in English, and fewer grammatical mistakes were observed. Most of them answered with phrases such as 'I'm sorry, I'll be late an hour' or 'I'm sorry, but I overslept and will be late for about an hour'. Meanwhile, several noticeable grammatical mistakes were observed in T1 students as follows:

- I am as soon as possible go to there.
- I'm sorry I late a hour because I overslep.
- Sorry I wake up now! I am foolish man. I go! In hurry.

Yet in terms of communication, all of these expressions are communicable, and some students used even longer expressions in English than in Japanese. This point is further discussed in Section 5 as a possibility for future English education.

4.5 Summary of the analyses

In analysing three speech acts—namely, apologies, complaints and compliments—several general tendencies were observed, as follows:

1. The participants in Kyoto tended to use or verbalise IFID more explicitly.

2. They also used more downgraders or upgraders to adjust the message.
3. Those in Tokyo tended to be silent in the same situations.
4. Fewer differences were observed in the professor speech acts, especially regarding apologies and compliments.
5. There seems to be several other factors that might have influenced the current data, including the level of universities.

Thus, several tendencies were revealed in this study. However, statistical differences were not achieved, partly because of the relatively small size of the data, including the frequency of IFID by Chi-square test (X^2=5.948, df=5, ns).

With regard to Research Question 1) presented in Section 3.1, 'Are there any differences in the use of politeness between people in Tokyo and in Kyoto? If so, what are the specific differences?', points 1) through 3) above provide the answers. When these findings are applied to Brown and Levinson's figure (Figure 1), the tendency of Tokyo to remain silent points towards 'Don't do a FTA' whereas that of Kyoto points towards 'Do a FTA, on record', sometimes directly (without redressive actions) and sometimes with politeness strategies (with redressive actions). In addition, point 4) above may imply that how we should behave to seniors is more fixed and regulated in our society and proves less regional differences.

In terms of Research Question 2), 'Is there any possibility that these differences influence their L2 performance?', because of the proficiency level of the participants, no clear transfer was observed. Instead, how their proficiency level influences their L2 communication was observed as briefly discussed in the previous section and will be further elaborated upon in Section 5.3.

5 Discussion

In this section, several points highlighted from the analysis will be discussed, focusing on regional differences, various factors influencing politeness and suggestions for English education.

5.1 Regional differences in positive politeness

The speech acts investigated in this study can be categorised as follows:

1) Apologies: FTA for the speaker
2) Complaints: FTA for the hearer
3) Compliments: face-enhancing act for the hearer

With regard to 1) apologies, the participants in Kyoto tended to acknowledge their (the speakers') fault and mention their compensation. On the other hand, those in Tokyo tended to mitigate the fault through the use of consideration (such

as 'Aren't you injured?'), emotion (such as 'wow') or others (such as 'What should I do?'). Similarly, in 2) complaints, more participants in Kyoto tried a FTA (made a complaint) than those in Tokyo, sometimes even requesting compensation. These tendencies might imply that people in Kyoto are more sensitive to individual rights or monetary compensation, partly because the monetary system historically developed earlier in Kansai.

On the other hand, when complimenting a friend, Kyoto speakers used more upgraders and try to emphasise the praise for others. In this sense, it might be interpreted that—for both directions, face-threatening and face-enhancing—the degree of involvement in Kansai (both with the self and the hearer) might be bigger, as illustrated in Figure 8, although the white arrows (the speaker's face-enhancing acts) have yet to be investigated.

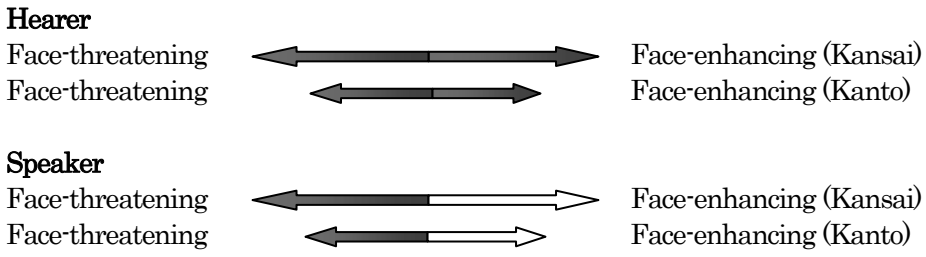


Figure 8 The degree of involvement in face-related acts

Considering that all the above speech acts are related to positive politeness, which is effectively used in English communication, and that Japanese politeness system has been found to be negative politeness oriented (e.g., Takahashi & Beebe 1993; Takiura 2008), it might be informative to further investigate the use of positive politeness in the Kansai region and consider the possibility of incorporating it into L2 communication.

Also, in this study, differences in the use of jokes and indirectness were rarely observed, which was contrary to the author's expectations. This outcome might be due to the age of the participants as university students are not yet full-fledged members of society and may not have developed their politeness sufficiently. As Kyoto is especially famous (or notorious) for its indirectness (e.g., Higuchi, 1976), further investigation is needed to observe its unique politeness system, using different generations and different methods.

5.2 Various factors influencing politeness

During the analysis, the author noted the possibility that several other factors might be influencing politeness, such as gender or speakers' academic level. With regard to gender, the largest differences were observed in compliments—whether

explicitly making a compliment or remaining silent. However, a more in-depth analysis indicated that the breakdown in differences by gender was only marginal. In fact, 87% of male students and 93% of female students explicitly complimented a friend; similar rates occurred when complimenting a professor (i.e., 73% of males and 76% of females).

The biggest factor suggested in this study was the level of university or one's academic level. The differences were most observable in the speech act of apologies to a professor. Although the number of examples is extremely limited, only T2 students—the highest university level among the four—mentioned background information before making an apology, for example, 'I was supposed to be in your office at 9:00am, today. But I'm sorry I overslept….' This type of establishing a common ground with the hearer was not observed at other universities. In addition, the actual expressions of T2 students for IFID (apologies) were more formal and appropriate for the register, considering that the interlocutor was a professor. In Japanese, 'I'm sorry' can be expressed in several different ways, and the choice contributes to the degree of politeness. Figure 9 shows the breakdown of the Japanese expressions of 'I'm sorry'. In order to exclude the regional differences, the data were compared with T1 participants.

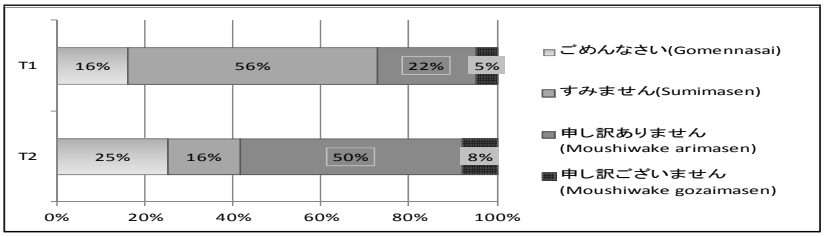


Figure 9 Breakdown of the Japanese expressions of 'I'm sorry'

Generally speaking, *Gomennasai* and *Sumimasen* are used for casual situations while *Moushiwake arimasen* and *Moushiwa gozaimasen* for formal situations. Because the interlocutor is a professor, more students at T2 (more than double the percentage at T1) used a formal and, therefore, more desirable expression.

However, different interpretations can be made of these data. The use of formal expressions indicates a certain distance from the interlocutor. In this sense, T1 students may feel closer to their professors or T2 students may be more negative politeness oriented and want to keep a certain distance. In either case, the relationship between one's academic level and politeness is an interesting topic as a future research agenda.

5.3 Suggestions for English education

As discussed in Section 4.4, some grammatical mistakes were observed in the English answers. The following examples are from T1 participants.

1) I am as soon as possible go to there.
2) I'm sorry I late a hour because I overslep.
3) Sorry, I'll rate about an hour.
4) Because I was oversleep, so I'm late about one o'clock.
5) Sorry I wake up now! I am foolish man. I go! In hurry.
6) I'm sorry, what should I do for apologise for this?

Despite some very basic grammatical mistakes, such as the misuse of the tense or the double use of 'am' and 'go', all the sentences are highly communicable.

In addition, in 5) and 6), the speaker's urgent feelings are conveyed; 5) shows how much he regrets oversleeping and 6) conveys what he can do to make up for the loss. It is surprising that these two answers were longer in English than their answers in Japanese. Their original Japanese answers can be translated, respectively, as 'I'm sorry I overslept. I'll hurry.' and 'I'm sorry. I'll hurry.' The differences indicate that the English answers are more eloquent and expressive and that the participants are motivated to communicate in English. These examples may imply the possibility that we may develop students' communicative ability by providing actual speech acts and connecting them with other activities, such as role-plays.

6 Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction of this study, although Kanto and Kansai are frequently compared and contrasted on TV programmes, academic and empirical comparisons are extremely limited, especially in the field of language acquisition. However, identifying one's communicative style in L1 and considering how to positively transfer to or incorporate one's L1 style into L2 performance must be an effective way to improve one's communicative ability in L2. This study provided a first step in investigating regional differences in L1 communication by using a questionnaire (i.e., DCT) and identified some general tendencies. As a DCT does not necessarily guarantee that participants actually perform as they answered, for deeper analysis we need to conduct further studies using different methods, including role-plays or ethnographical observations. In addition, as only those who were born and raised in Tokyo and Kyoto were chosen for this study, the usable data size became much smaller than originally expected, despite the large number of questionnaires collected.

Nonetheless, the analysis was able to identify several tendencies, suggesting

regional differences and the possibility that these differences might be utilised for L2 communication. In the future, this study will be expanded into several different directions, using different research methods, participants from various generations and regions, and a larger sample for full-fledged quantitative analysis in order to determine how to utilise L1 communication style for L2.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the two professors who helped me distribute the DCT in their classes and all the participants who completed the DCT. Without their contribution, this study would not have been possible.

Notes

1) This article is based on the presentation at the Sociolinguistics Symposium 19 (SS19) held in Berlin in August 2012, entitled 'Different cities and different rapport management'.
2) This table was translated by the author.
3) The DCT was distributed in the classes of two professors in Kyoto who supported the current study.
4) In order to observe the differences between Kyoto and Osaka, data from participants who were born and brought up in Osaka were also analysed for reference. Although the data were highly limited in number (18), they showed similar tendencies as those from Kyoto, with a slightly higher number of uses of jokes.

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（2012 年 9 月 10 日）